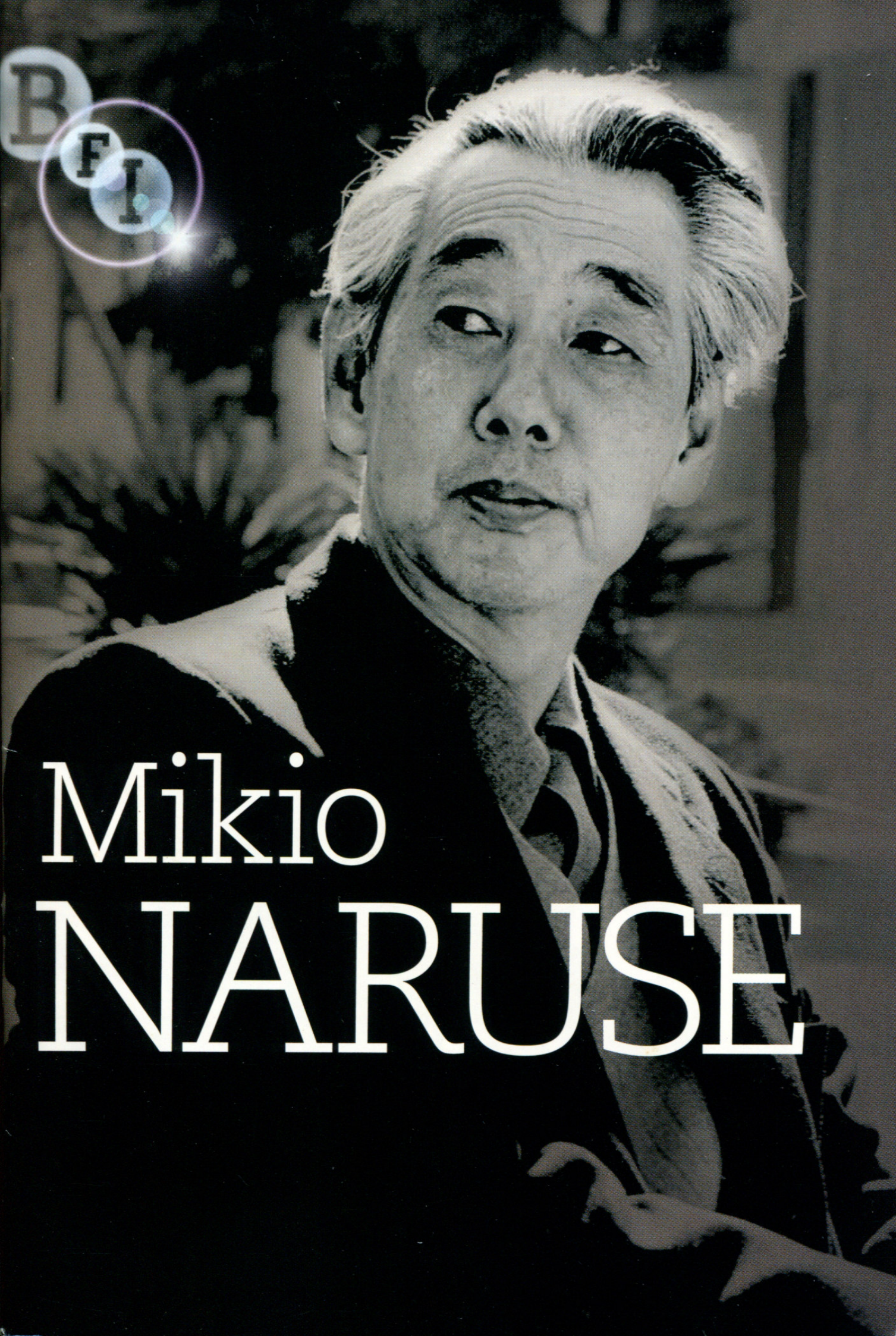
BFI
Mikio
NARUSE

Mikio Naruse

Born in Tokyo on 20 August 1905, Naruse grew up as the youngest child in a poor artisanal family. When his father died in 1920, the 15-year-old Naruse found work as a prop man at Shochiku's Kamata studio. Yasujiro Ozu joined the same studio three years later, but whereas Ozu was allowed to become a director in 1927, Naruse remained assistant director for a decade, persistently but unsuccessfully proposing scripts to the studio. In 1930 he was given his first directorial assignment: a short martial arts comedy written pseudonymously by the studio boss, Shiro Kido. Naruse collapsed with exhaustion at the end of the shoot, and his friend Heinosuke Gosho stepped in to edit the film.

Making mostly shorts and programme pictures for a few years, Naruse's first major film was his 15th title, the melodrama *Motheaten Spring* (Mushibameru haru, 1932). Throughout his youth and his early career, receiving only a very meagre salary from Shochiku, Naruse lived near the studio in a poor sector of downtown Tokyo, lodging above a small neighbourhood restaurant, moving with the family every time the business needed to relocate. Naruse has described this period of his life as lonely and miserable. Rumour has it that a waitress fell in love with him and, receiving no response, she committed suicide. Possibly because of such stories or perhaps because of his out-of-place class background at the studio, Naruse at that time acquired the reputation of being cold-hearted and distant, a loner.

In 1934, having made 33 films for Shochiku, he joined a relatively new production company in Tokyo, Photochemical Laboratory (PCL), which became Toho in 1937. There he made his first three sound features in 1935, including the masterful *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* (Tsuma yo bara no yo ni, 1935). Like many of the best directors making the transition to sound cinema, Naruse experimented intensively with this expansion of the medium's expressive possibilities and he continued paying a great deal of attention to his soundtracks throughout the rest of his career. His personal life also entered a new phase: he married the star of *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*, Sachiko Chiba, in 1937. She made five films with him, but they divorced three years later.

Wife! Be Like a Rose! was shown internationally, including a critically rebuffed release in the US. Naruse became known as a specialist in family dramas set among the lower middle class and the casualised working class, focusing mainly on women in those milieus (bar hostesses, geisha, maids, harassed wives, young women forced into marriages for economic survival or security). His skill for directing women made him a much sought-after director by established as well as new actresses. At this time, Akira Kurosawa briefly functioned as Naruse's assistant on *Avalanche* (Nadare, 1937).

Conventional accounts of Naruse's career describe this phase from 1935 to 1939, up to *The Whole Family Works* (Hataraku ikka) and *Sincerity* (Magokoro), both 1939) as his first glory period, soon followed by allegedly undistinguished films made during World War II and its immediate aftermath in a famine-ridden and devastated Japan under US occupation. At this time, he first directed the actress most frequently associated with his films, Hideko Takamine (17 films between 1941 and 1966), in *Hideko the Bus Conductor* (Hideko no shasho-san, 1941). As the title suggests, Takamine was already a star recognisable enough for her name to feature in the film's title.

As censorship tightened even further during the war, Naruse's films came to be regarded as rather 'mannered', possibly referring to a more stylised pictorial aesthetics evident in the stills from films made in this period. The ex-editor of *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jean Narboni, noted about this period:

> It seems that when Naruse had difficulty maintaining an always shifting and conflictual equilibrium between the narrative, the dramatic expressiveness conveyed through body language and acting, and the formal apparatus of cinema, he always emphasised the final one of these three dimensions, which is rather surprising for a cineaste whose mise en scène is usually described as, and praised for being, 'invisible'.

During the war he also made some films set in the past, glorifying the warrior spirit. But his wartime films also include the subtly subversive *Mother Never Dies* (Haha wa shinazu, 1942) and a stifling depiction of small village torpor sarcastically called *This Happy Life* (Tanoshiki kana jinsei, 1944). In 1946, Naruse got married again. His second wife was Tsuneko Iwabuchi, the sister of his soundman Kiichi Iwabuchi.

In 1947, shortly after achieving a box-office success with *Four Love Stories 2: Even Parting is Enjoyable* (Yotsu no koi no monogatari 2: Wakare mo tanoshii), a major strike broke out at Toho lasting 195 days and a number of directors, writers and actors left the company to set up Shintoho. Naruse's second glory period is said to have run from his first Shintoho film, *Ginza Beauty Products* (Ginza Gesho, 1951) to about 1956, although he never stopped making films for Toho as well as for some independent companies until 1954. In 1951 he also made *Repast* (Meshi) starring Setsuo Hara and Ken Uehara, acclaimed as the second best film of the year. His one and only big international hit was made for Shintoho at this time: *Mother* (Okasan, 1952).

This was also the moment when European film festivals discovered Japanese cinema by way of Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi and Yasujiro Ozu. Naruse achieved some of film history's greatest works in the early 1950s, including *Lightning* (Inazuma, 1952), *Husband and Wife* (Fufu, 1953), *Wife* (Tsuma, 1953), the sublime *Sound of the Mountain* (Yama no oto, 1954 – Naruse's favourite film), *Late Chrysanthemums* (Bangiku, 1954) and the film consensually regarded as his masterpiece, *Floating Clouds* (Ukigumo, 1955).

The 'legend' of Naruse's career, as Narboni called it, treats the last decade of the cineaste's career as a chequered story with some good films. In fact, he continued to make astonishingly subtle and complex work, as in *Untamed* (Arakure, 1957), his first colour film *Summer Clouds* (Iwashigumo, 1958; shot almost entirely on location), the underrated *Anzukko* (1958), the widely acclaimed black and white Tohoscope film *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (Onna ga kaidan wo agaru toki, 1960), *The Approach of Autumn* (Aki tachinu, 1960), *A Wanderer's Notebook* (Horoki, 1962), *Yearning* (Midareru, 1964) and his last film *Scattered Clouds* (Midaregumo, 1967). Naruse died on 2 July 1969.

Throughout his career, Naruse either wrote or doctored his scripts, adhered to the set production schedule and budget, and exposed, sometimes to the metre, exactly the amount of footage allocated to the production. He did not rehearse his actors or his crew very much, if at all. He demanded absolute silence and concentration on his set. The portrait painted of Naruse by former colleagues, and repeated by journalists and academics, is that of a morose, even cantankerous, secretive loner who did what his employers demanded of him and communicated little with his cast or crew. Naruse's 'bitterness' is usually summed up by a quote (quite probably an accurate one) attributed to him: 'I have always known, from a very young age, that the world is treacherous.'

In his recent book on the director, Narboni argues convincingly that the standard periodisation of Naruse's career as well as the 'legend' about him are bogus. Naruse's first wife, Sachiko Chiba, later acknowledged that their divorce owed much to Naruse being treated as lower-class by her snobbish mother (as well as to his drinking habits). His second wife said in an interview in 1993 that Naruse was a quiet, calm man, concerned about his collaborators, an affectionate father, a dreamer as well as a workaholic and a rather strange and mysterious man.

Narboni points out that the prevailing image of Naruse is likely to be inaccurate because it is based on a lack of understanding of his position in the industry, together with an unease at Naruse's avoidance of an often false but nevertheless expected set of social rituals. At Shochiku, where he first acquired his negative personal reputation, he was consistently denigrated by the studio boss, Shiro Kido, who preferred Takashi Shimizu, Heinosuke Gosho and his close friend Yasujiro Ozu. The latter, although joining the company three years after him, was promoted to director three years before Naruse, who was kept down and then given only some short potboiler projects, in spite of Ozu's admiration for *A Motheaten Spring*. In fact, Ozu went on the record a number of times expressing his immense respect for Naruse's films.

Mikio Naruse's grave in Enkouji, a Buddhist temple in Seijo, Tokyo. Photo by Bruce Goldstein.

Narboni also points out that some of Naruse's early films for Shochiku clearly demonstrated his ample talents, especially *Little Man, Do Your Best* (Koshiben ganbare, 1931) and *Apart From You* (Kimi to wakarete, 1933). The commercially successful *Little Man, Do Your Best* became a template at Shochiku for further comedies, including Ozu's *I Was Born, But...* (1933). However, Naruse's version was harsher and more bitter about social pressures than Ozu's reworking of the material. Both Naruse and Ozu were still trying to find their own cinematic voice at the time, experimenting with procedures and styles inspired by French and American cinemas of the period.

Japanese critics and journalists also came to recognise Naruse's work as outstanding very early in his career, ranking him among the best Japanese filmmakers in 1933 for his *Everynight Dreams* (Yogoto no yume), a film that shows a marked influence of Joseph von Sternberg's *The Docks of New York* (1928). Even in the so-called fallow periods of his career there are some particularly fine films that are easily among the best work achieved anywhere in the world at that time.

What remained consistent throughout his many great films (most of the 60 films that are known to have survived) is Naruse's main preoccupation: to show how people, with all their flaws and strengths, are in fact shaped by the specific historical conditions in which they find themselves having to carve out their own breathing and living spaces. His characters are never conceived as examples of universal humanity. They do not come into his fictional world as 'ready-made' people endowed with more or less admirable psychological traits which are then 'tested' by events, triumphing over them or succumbing to them. On the contrary, Naruse's figures function more as 'spaces' where a variety of forces – historical, economic, political and cultural – intersect with a character's dispositions and often very limited abilities. His characters are people whose emotional lives and even bodily movements are quite literally moulded by the social-economic constellation in which they have to find a way of living their feelings, desires, thoughts and aspirations. And the world in which they have to do so is indeed 'treacherous'.

On the evidence of his films, Naruse showed a supreme understanding of and empathy with the ways in which people try to play the cards that history has dealt them. There is no sense of fate or destiny in his films, although these concepts are at times invoked as a kind of consolation, something to make defeat bearable for a while. Instead, his films are pervaded by a stubborn, unrelenting desire for a world in which one might live differently: where socio-economic pressures do not distort people's lives and deform people's characters quite so damagingly.

And like most of the great directors who address these issues of social change and the reproduction of social existence by way of fictional narratives, Naruse focuses on the social space and roles assigned to women to make us realise how 'the ways of the world' imprint themselves into our daily lives and shape the persons that we manage to be.

Paul Willemen

The materialist ethic of Mikio Naruse

When writing about the oeuvre of Mikio Naruse, critics invariably lapse into invidious comparisons and a list of negatives. A late addition to the pantheon of Japanese auteurs, he has always been rated below Kurosawa, Ozu and Mizoguchi. There is a common chorus of complaints. He made intimate domestic dramas but his work isn't as playful or charming as Ozu's. He served his apprenticeship at Shochiku's Kamata studios, alongside Ozu, but couldn't or wouldn't master the lightly entertaining house style. They were glad to dispense with his services because he persisted in being heavy, sombre and depressing. He was a classic director whose career embraced two golden ages of Japanese cinema, but his work doesn't exemplify the distinctive stylistic flourishes of the Japanese film as celebrated by David Bordwell or the radical aberrances of Japanese aesthetic practice as outlined by Noel Burch. He made women's melodramas but they are not as exquisitely moving as Mizoguchi's, either stylistically or emotionally.

It is instructive that the first major Naruse retrospective in the West was organised by Audie Bock, an American woman. The American male critics have always treated him as second-rate. They were entranced by the boyish playfulness of Ozu and the macho histrionics of Kurosawa. They could locate Zen Buddhist aesthetics in late Ozu and Mizoguchi, Zen and samurai ethics in Kurosawa. In search of spiritual elevation or showy displays of stylishness, they found Naruse too bleak in philosophy, too austere in style.

It is time to debunk some of the pieties of Western criticism of Japanese cinema. Nearly 20 years ago, Japanese academic critic Shigehiko Hasumi[1] deplored its omissions and biases and, in his recent attack on the American academy and Western criticism of Japanese film, US-based academic critic Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto[2] argues that American academics and critics retain a vested interest in culturalist and formalist approaches to Japanese film. In Australia as well as America, Japan has been seen through the prism of wartime Washington intelligence lenses as the home of the chrysanthemum and the sword, the dichotomy of aestheticism and militarism, of ritual refinement and brutal social practices. Naruse refuses to service these readings; he exposes their inadequacy, not his inadequacy.

Naruse is a materialist par excellence. There is no escape from the world as it is. Life is a school of hard knocks. We all have to face up to disappointments, betrayals and loneliness, and yet keep on going. His is a world of disillusion, not illusions; of survival, not suicide – or other more comforting forms of self-transcendence, such as religion, aesthetics, or poetics. In Naruse's world, there is no transcendence, only daily bodily existence subject to social and economic conditions.

His characters battle to satisfy basic physical, social and economic needs. They seek comfort and security in relationships with family, friends and partners, but try to extricate themselves from oppressive relationships. Their bodies need food and clothing, housing and sex. They need money to buy food and clothing, to pay the rent and the doctor's bills. Money changing hands, being counted – these are the recurring images of Naruse films. His central characters are single women coping with the problems of making a living, supporting a sick parent or child, finding companionship and sexual partners, seeking ways of reducing their burdens and improving the quality of their lives.

The images that linger in my memory are of an ageing geisha sitting in front of a mirror, dyeing or plucking out her grey hairs; of a woman looking hopefully at a man who cannot return her look; of women who doggedly resume the daily grind of business as usual after the dashing of their hopes – getting dressed, applying make-up and climbing the stairs, surviving disillusion to face another day.

Naruse was a studio director, working initially for Shochiku, where he underwent a decade-long apprenticeship, and then for Toho, where he remained until the end of his working life. He spent 47 years in total in the industry and produced 88 films over his 37 years as a director (between 1930 and 1967). A glum, taciturn man, he did not endear himself to his superiors, his crews or his actors, but he doggedly persisted in turning out quality films efficiently and economically.

The earliest surviving Naruse film, *Flunky, Work Hard* (Koshiben gambare, 1931), shows him awkwardly mixing melodrama with slapstick routines, betraying the strain of having to produce Shochiku's Kamata studio formula of laughter with tears. The main character is an unsuccessful insurance salesman who cannot provide adequately for the needs of his family and has to evade the rent collector. He competes with another salesman to sell life insurance to a rich woman and finally lands the deal, only to learn that his son has been hit by a train and is at death's door in hospital. The holes in his shoes, his ploys to evade the rent collector and the competitive games between the salesmen are treated as Chaplinesque opportunities for slapstick. As in Ozu's *I Was Born, But…* (1932), class distinction is an issue – and is fought out on the children's playground. But the film turns heavily melodramatic at the end – with an ominously dripping tap drowning an insect in the washbasin, and the parents weeping forlornly by the prostrate body of their child. The motif of a toy aeroplane is milked for irony and pathos.

There are fewer glaring gags in his two extant 1933 silents, *Everynight Dreams* (Yogoto no yume) and *Apart From You* (Kimi to wakarete). Both films are strong melodramas which impressed the Japanese film critics (they rated highly in the annual Best Ten list of Japanese films) and introduced the two themes that would persist throughout Naruse's oeuvre: single women battling to support their ungrateful families and retain their self-esteem; and unhappy couples who cannot live apart or together. The melodramatic events of *Everynight Dreams* (aka 'Nightly Dreams') – abandoned wife faces prospect of prostitution, son has serious accident, husband returns but commits crime and then suicide – would be much less in evidence in the later works, but the social realist setting and the focus on losers and battlers remain.

In the early films it is the Depression that is causing poverty and unemployment; in the later films there will be other historically specific economic pressures facing the central characters. The frustrations and moroseness of the lovers in *Floating Clouds* (Ukigumo, 1955) are directly linked to and embedded in the depressed and demoralised social and economic conditions of early post-war Japan: the bombed-out cities, the shortage of food and housing, the ignominy of national defeat and foreign occupation, the economic temptation of prostitution with American military personnel. The ageing geisha of *Flowing* (Nagareru, 1956) are not just suffering from the problems of age but from the post-war decline in the status and rewards of their profession. *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (Onna ga kaidan wo agaru toki, 1960) is virtually a dramatised documentary on the precarious life of bar hostesses on the Ginza in the guise of a melodrama about a high-minded widow trying to maintain her business and her self-respect in the face of strong pressures to abandon both. Even though the melodrama of *Yearning* (Midareru, 1964) centres on a tortured, quasi-incestuous love story between a high-principled war widow and her delinquent young brother-in-law, it also documents the rise of the supermarket as a threat to small family businesses.

Everynight Dreams was successful not only because it created a convincing social context for the melodrama but also because it featured a very delicate performance by the silent star, Sumiko Kurishima, in the role of the heroine. Naruse was to benefit from the casting of seasoned actresses in his films' leading roles. His principal star in the later works was the very versatile Hideko Takamine, who could play the spirited young girl, the gracious lady, the repressed bourgeoise, the angry rebel and the mature voluptuary with equal conviction. But there were other female stars whose performances enhanced his films: Isuzu Yamada (in *Tsuruhachi* and *Tsurujiro*, 1938); Setsuko Hara (in *Repast* [Meshi, 1951] and *Sound of the Mountain* [Yama no oto, 1954]); Machiko Kyo (in *Older Brother, Younger Sister* [Ani imoto, 1953]); Haruko Sugimura (in *Late Chrysanthemums* [Bangiku, 1954]); and Kinuyo Tanaka (in *Flowing* [Nagareru, 1956] and *Her Lonely Lane* [Horoki, 1962]). *Flowing*'s cast featured a whole inventory of veteran female stars: Yamada, Kurishima, Sugimura, Takamine, Tanaka and Mariko Okada.

The unusual insight into feminine experience, the acute understanding and detailed elaboration of women's feelings that mark Naruse's films are also due in part to the collaboration of women as scriptwriters, often adapting women's novels. Max Tessier noted an 'elective affinity' between Naruse and the popular woman novelist Fumiko Hayashi.[3] Audie Bock and Catherine Russell have likewise drawn attention to the inspirational role of Hayashi in Naruse's career, and to his identification with her personal and professional struggles.[4] Many of his masterpieces are adaptations of her stories: *Floating Clouds*, *Repast*, *Lightning*, *Late Chrysanthemums* and *Her Lonely Lane*. Sumie Tanaka wrote the screenplays for most of these and another woman, Yoko Mizuki, was responsible for the scripts of other masterworks: *Mother* (1952), *Husband and Wife* (1953), *Older Brother, Younger Sister* (1953) and *Sound of the Mountain* (1954), as well as *Floating Clouds*. Mizuki's script shifted the emphasis of Kawabata's novel *Song of the Mountain* away from its male point of view and principal focus on the psychology of the old man, giving more dramatic attention to the feelings and experiences of the daughter-in-law with whom he forms an obsessional attachment.

Alain Masson, in a fine essay in *Positif*, says that almost nothing happens in a Naruse film, that they are constructed around an event that does not take place.[5] It is true that unhappy wives often end up remaining in their marriages, and that lonely women are often frustrated in their attempts to find a true lover and end up alone, but a lot happens in the course of the films. Naruse's discontented and frustrated characters actively pursue their options and do not just submit to their fates.

If they end up where they started, it is only after they have explored all their social, economic and sexual potential, or resolutely refused some options because they are incompatible with their personal (or socially conditioned) self-respect. As Audie Bock says, 'There are no happy endings for Naruse, but there are incredibly enlightened defeats.'[6]

A few comments on the issue of style. Many commentators have drawn attention to Naruse's skill in non-verbal communication, in using subtle changes in body language, the look, the glance and the averted gaze to convey crucial information about his characters and their relationships. It is also generally agreed that he mainly followed standard international codes of editing, editing on action and eye-line matching. He learnt his trade in the silent era, working on both comedy and melodrama, and he knew how to use abrupt or jolting cuts to reinforce the melodramatic impact and deepen the irony and pathos of the situation. As Alain Masson astutely observes, his style is complex and rent with oppositions – Masson calls them antagonisms – between the calm surface of everyday routine and the base blackness of the world; between fracture and composure; between delicacy and brutality.[7]

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The comings and goings of Mikio Naruse

There is a cinema of walking – just as surely as there is a cinema of driving, or flying. Whether framed statically, in order to emphasise the distances and weight of the surrounding world, or shot with the camera travelling behind, in front of or alongside the human figure, such walking literally 'paces out' the mood, rhythm, meaning and method of certain films. Directors as diverse as Chantal Akerman, Béla Tarr and Quentin Tarantino construct their material from the step-by-step motion of their characters, their action turning, for example, the metropolitan city into a space of personalised reverie or dread-filled anticipation. Idyllic stroll or manic stomp, narratives can either find or lose their way in the paths and detours traced out by walking.

Mikio Naruse built up, second by second, across all of his films, the cinema's finest monument to walking. The French filmmaker and critic Bertrand Tavernier, paying homage to *Sound of the Mountain* (1954), said of Naruse that he 'minutely describes each journey' that arises in the narrated lives of his characters, and that 'such comings and goings represent uncertain yet reassuring transitions: they are a way of taking stock, of defining a feeling'. Comings and goings are indeed rendered with an almost fanatical or obsessive attention to detail in these films: the setting out, the route that is taken, the approach to a dwelling or workplace. This very often uses an element of repetition across scenes and across the imaginary months or years that the story conjures: the same camera angle, the same frame, the same gesture – but with a difference in the bodies as they age, as the wear and tear of bittersweet experience sets into them. That is what we see, for instance, in the tracks of Yukiko (Hideko Takamine) in *Floating Clouds* (1955).

But it is most often the viewer alone who is permitted to 'take stock' of these movements and their inexorable repetition. For the figures in these films, walking, as an embodiment of resilience, registers far more truly as a way of surviving, hanging on to a thin thread. The thousand and one small transitions they make, from one little zone of social-emotional space to the next, are indeed 'uncertain yet reassuring'. Naruse as a filmmaker was fascinated with the narrative and cinematic forms offered by the device of a journey – a short story he wrote in the mid-1930s sketched what would

become a typical plot for him: a young girl setting out to visit her faraway mother – and yet we remain very far, at every point of his career, from the type of strenuous, action-packed 'heroic journey' preached by contemporary Hollywood blockbusters.

Journeying in Naruse is intermittent. Paths are broken off and picked up again; sidetracks occur. And, most importantly, these journeys do not need to occur on the scale of thousands of miles, from country to country (although they sometimes do, especially due to the displacements wrought by war): a journey can be a walk down a street, as in *Floating Clouds*, through the doors, rooms and zones of an apartment, as in *Late Chrysanthemums* (1954), or up and down a staircase, as in *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (1960). These are journeys of the everyday, where time is measured out in footfalls, ticking clocks, spoonfuls – and where even the most melodramatic blow or the most ecstatic moment of pleasure (and his cinema is not devoid of these intense dramatic high points) cannot truly take the characters out of the unromantic, unsentimental forward progression of their existences.

The walking journey motif works on a further level in Naruse's films. The French critic Jean Douchet once put it well: we advance, as spectators, alongside his characters, neither knowing more or less than they do ahead of the actions and interactions we see unfolding. The very antithesis, therefore, of the cinema of Hitchcock, Fritz Lang or Brian De Palma. We must read the gestures, the glances, the living situations of others as we encounter them, as if we (with a character) had just stepped through the front door: again, Yukiko's path, initiating the story of *Floating Clouds* as she enters the household of the obviously married Kengo (Masayuki Mori), is exemplary.

Western arthouse audiences with a mainly canonical, heavily pre-filtered acquaintance with Japanese cinema tend to locate the great auteurs – Ozu, Mizoguchi, Kurosawa and more recently Naruse – in a vacuum outside time and history, invoking various fuzzy 'ancient hallowed traditions' of storytelling and pictorial style. This kind of casual abstraction robs Naruse's work of much of its interest and depth.

Let us consider, for example, Naruse's films of the 1950s within the pre-New Wave stirrings of that decade – not just the European New Wave(s), but the Asian ones as well. Douchet is right to propose the comparison between Naruse in this period and contemporaries such as Roberto Rossellini and Ingmar Bergman: here, in the post-World War II era, we witness the flowering of a mode of filmmaking devoted to the 'eternal present moment', something that both liberates the cinema and ignites a struggle with historic memory – precisely the social traumas that must be obliterated from consciousness (always unsuccessfully, of course) in order for 'the present' to prosper, unfettered. Such history is never far away, lurking in the off-spaces of Naruse's films – and the occasional devastating flashback is there, like near the start of *Floating Clouds*, to poke a hole in the eternal present of his fool-for-love characters' consciousness, and take stock of the distance and difference between the then and the now.

When a Woman Ascends the Stairs offers the most visible marker of Naruse's negotiation of social modernity. The modern world – and modern cinema – enter everywhere here, in the meticulous set design of the nightclubs as in the cool jazz score. The relations of bodies to architectural forms and shapes evoke Antonioni, as does a new atmosphere of urban alienation and ennui. But on that central staircase – so artfully constructed and shot to Naruse's scenographic specifications – we meet again the daily, material weight of this cinema of humble, unspectacular, and yet still somehow momentous walking movements: those comings and goings that are (as Tavernier attests) the 'gestures repeated a thousand times' that create the filmmaker's 'chronicles of flux and doubt'.

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When a Woman Ascends the Stairs

Credits

Director
Mikio Naruse
Producer
Ryuzo Kikushima
Cinematography
Masao Tamai
Production design
Satoshi Chuko
Music
Toshiro Mayuzumi
Editing
Hideshi Ohi
Costumes
Hideko Takamine
Production company
Toho Co. Ltd

Cast

Keiko Yashiro
Hideko Takamine
Nobuhiko Fujisaki
Masayuki Mori
Junko Inchihashi
Reiko Dan
Kenichi Komatsu
Tatsuya Nakadai
Matsukichi Sekine
Daisuke Kato
Goda
Ganjiro Nakamura
Minobe
Eitaro Ozawa
Yuri
Keiko Awaji
Bar owner
Kyu Sazanka
Fortune-teller
Noriko Sengoku

Floating Clouds

Credits

Director
Mikio Naruse
Producer
Masumi Fujimoto
Assistant Director
Kihachi Okamoto
From a story by
Fumiko Hayashi
Scenario
Yoko Mizuki
Cinematography
Masao Tamai
Music
Ichiro Saito
Editing
Hideshi Ohi
Production design
Satoshi Chuko
Sound
Hisashi Shimonaga
Production company
Toho Co. Ltd

Cast

Yukiko Koda
Hideko Takamine
Kengo Tomioka
Masayuki Mori
Sei Mukai
Mariko Okada
Sugio Iba
Isao Yamagata
Kuniko Tomioka
Chieko Nakakita
Seikichi Mukai
Daisuke Kato
Nomiya no musume
Mayuri Mokusho
Yakushima no okaasan
Noriko Sengoku
Futsuin no shikensho-chou
Fuyuki Murakami
Isha
Heihachiro Okawa
Futsuin no shoin – Suitou
Nobuo Kaneko
American soldier
Roy James
Shinja
Akira Tani

Late Chrysanthemums

Credits

Director
Mikio Naruse
Producer
Masumi Fujimoto
From a story by
Fumio Hayashi
Scenario
Sumie Tanaka and Toshiro Ide
Cinematography
Masao Tamai
Music
Ichiro Saito
Editing
Eiji Ooi
Production design
Satoshi Chuko
Production management
Teruo Maki
Assistant Director
Masayoshi Kawanishi
Sound
Hisashi Shimonaga
Production company
Toho Co. Ltd

Cast

Kin
Haruko Sugimura
Nobu
Sadako Sawamura
Tamae
Chikako Hosokawa
Tomi
Yuko Mochizuki
Tabe
Ken Uehara
Kiyoshi
Hiroshi Koizumi
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Bernard Eisenschitz was part of the editorial group of the prestigious journal *Cahiers du cinéma*. He is a curator, programmer, actor and one of the most respected film historians today. He currently edits the film journal *Cinéma*.

Teruo Ishii (1924 – 2005) became Mikio Naruse's assistant on *Report on Prof. Ishinaka's Conduct* (1950). He also assisted Naruse on two films starring Kinuyo Tanaka, *Ginza Beauty Products* (1951) and *Mother* (1952). The latter was widely shown in Europe and in the USA. Ishii became best known as a director of gangster films and grotesque fantasy thrillers.

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